

VICTORIA  
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MUSEUM

A PICTURE BOOK  
OF JAPANESE SWORD  
GUARDS

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VICTORIA . . .  
& ALBERT  
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A PICTURE BOOK  
OF JAPANESE SWORD  
GUARDS

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## INTRODUCTION

The Japanese have never been surpassed, perhaps never even rivalled, in the domain of fine craftsmanship in metal. And for the study of this particular phase of art, the various mounts that served both to strengthen and to decorate the Swords, Daggers and kindred weapons of Old Japan, have peculiar importance, for it was upon them that the skill of the best metal-workers was ever lavished, less talented craftsmen contenting themselves with work in humbler fields.

Most important of them, from its size and shape and from the fact that the earlier workers restricted their attention to this mount, is the Guard (*Tsuba*), a more or less flat plate, of circular, oval, quatrefoil, or other outline, averaging some 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter and having in its centre a wedge-shaped opening to take the characteristically wide tang or handle portion of the blade. It is usually decorated on both faces, the design being either identical or continued from the front on to the back. (The other mounts are described and explained in a framed exhibit in the Museum showing a typical weapon "dismounted" into its component parts.)

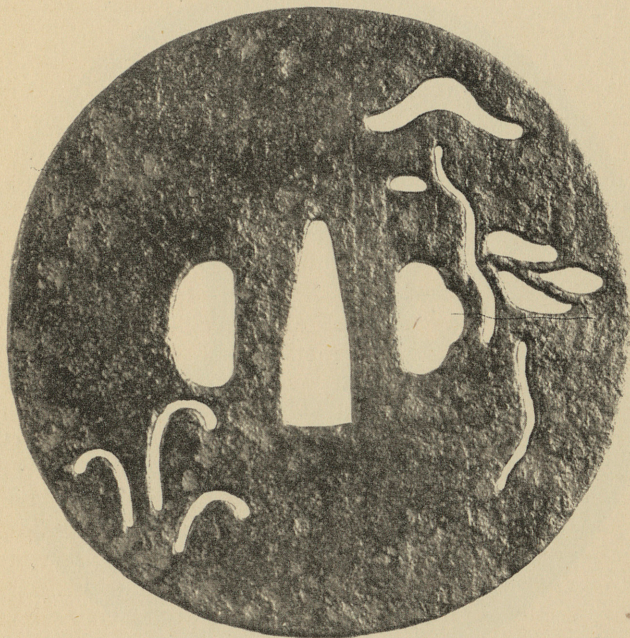
The range of metals employed is very extensive. *Iron*, as might be expected, was almost exclusively used during the Age of Civil War (15th-16th century), though it was not despised as a medium for fine craftsmanship in later and more peaceful days, when the Sword degenerated into a mere decorative adjunct of costume, so far as its mounting was concerned. It was during this era of peace (the régime of the Tokugawa Shōguns, 1603-1868) that the use of the softer metals was, if not initiated, at least widely developed. *Silver* and (very rarely) *gold* are found, but the favourite materials are *copper* and its alloys, including *brass*, *shakudō*, *shibuichi* and *sentoku*, the last three peculiar to Japan and owing to their beautiful surface-colours (violet-black, olive or silver-grey, and yellow-ochre) to a special "pickling," which was also applied to copper itself.

Apart from their use for the body of a mount, all these soft metals are used with remarkable felicity, singly or in

combination, as *added* decoration, and the variety of treatment and the ingenuity with which ever-new effects are created by different groupings of the metals and the methods of working them are a never-failing source of wonder and admiration even to those who have studied the subject for long years.

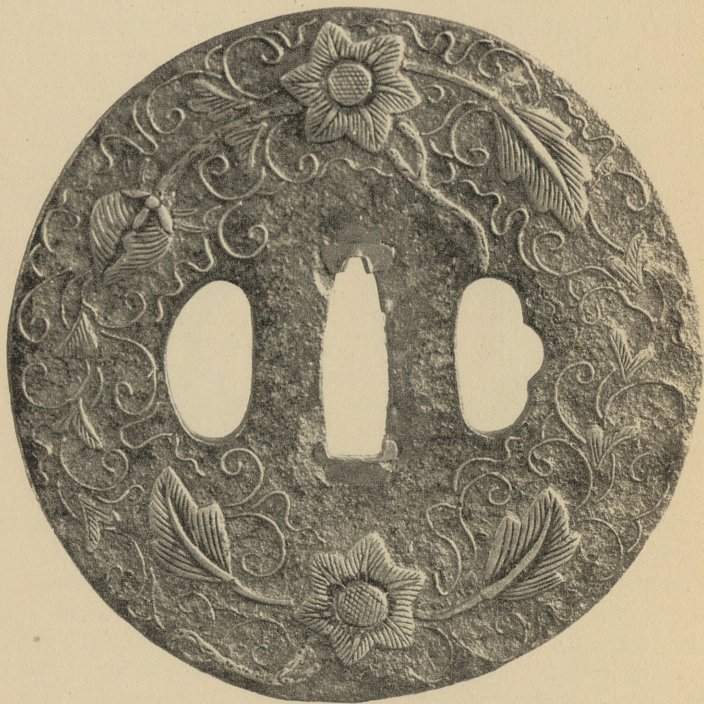
The period of serious activity in the making of decorative sword-mounts may be reckoned as the 450 years ending with the third quarter of the 19th century, when, by Imperial edict and as a step towards the modernisation of the country, the Japanese Sword, hitherto the chief badge and proudest possession of the Samurai or soldier and gentleman of Old Japan, suddenly became a thing of the past. Of the more than 3,000 craftsmen of note, recorded as having made sword-furniture during this period, the greater number belonged to distinct and exclusive schools, each with its characteristic style and methods of working, and many of them as famous in their own country and among foreign connoisseurs as any Western school of painting or sculpture. The Museum collection has been classified under more than sixty of these schools, together with a few supplementary groups illustrating certain less academic styles and techniques.

Owing to the advisability of reproducing Japanese sword-mounts in the full size of the originals (or very nearly so) it is obviously out of the question, in a little book like this, to represent all the schools and styles, and the examples have therefore been selected primarily on the grounds of their fineness and general attractiveness as subjects for illustration. Nor is it possible to display here the extraordinary wealth of designs employed by the *kinkō* or maker of sword-furniture, or the rich colour effects produced by the variety of materials ready to his hand—"painting with the chisel" is the native phrase. But one can at least realise the skill with which a design is adapted and "placed," the inventiveness that made the most trivial and unexpected subject serve the artist's turn with a dignity no less assured than that of the noblest theme.



I. SACRED FUNGUS AND YOUNG BRACKEN.  
PIERCED IRON.  
STYLE OF THE 15TH CENTURY.

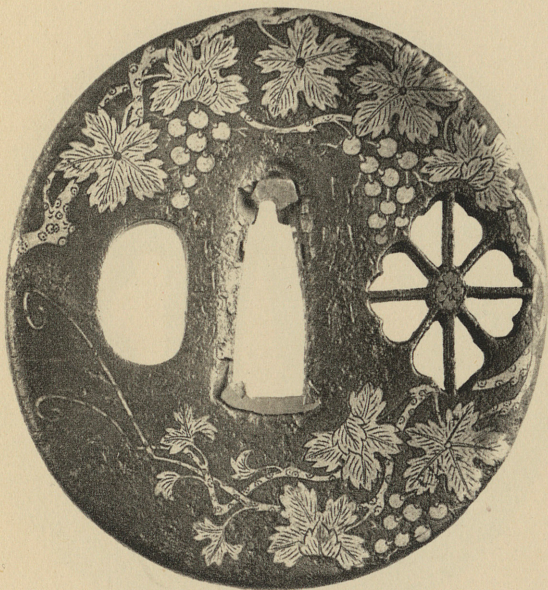
M.211—1921.



2. FLORAL ORNAMENT.  
IRON, WITH BRASS INCRUSTATION.  
"ŌNIN" STYLE. 16TH CENTURY.  
GIVEN BY MRS. GUEST.

M.220—1923.





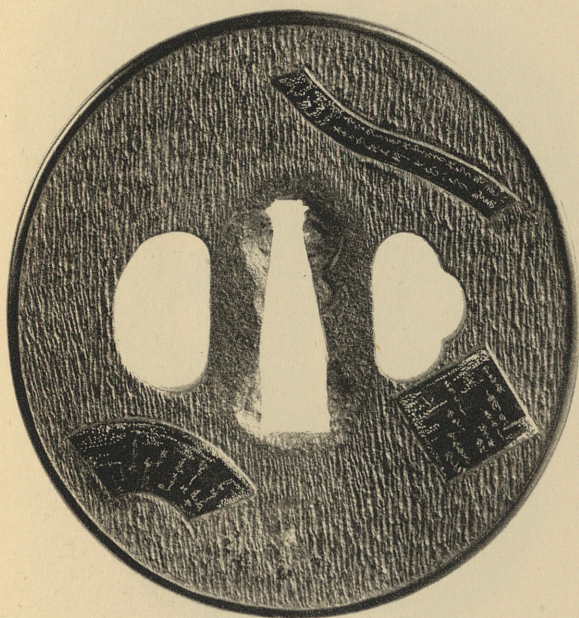
3. VINE AND YANAGISAWA BADGE.  
IRON, WITH SENTOKU INLAY.  
SIGNED : *Nagayoshi of Yamashiro*.  
16TH OR 17TH CENTURY.

M.202—1921.



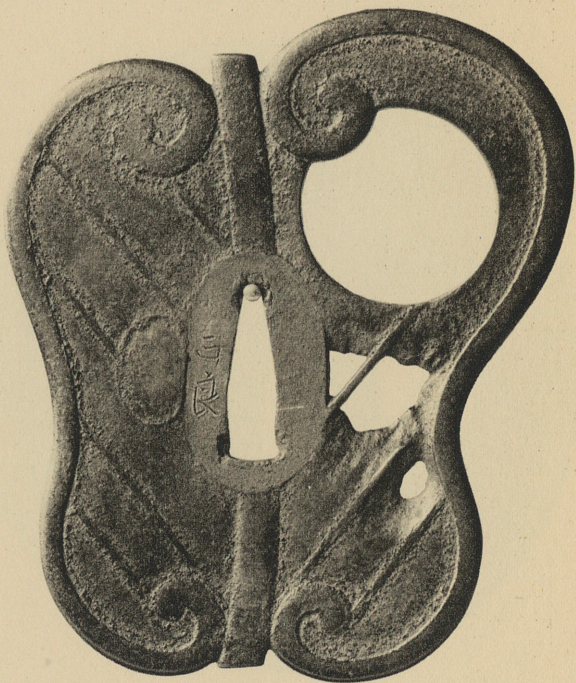
4. LEAVES WITH DEWDROPS.  
COPPER, WITH SHAKUDŌ, GOLD AND SILVER INLAY.  
SIGNED : *Umetada Miōju*.  
17TH OR EARLY 18TH CENTURY.

M.5—1920.



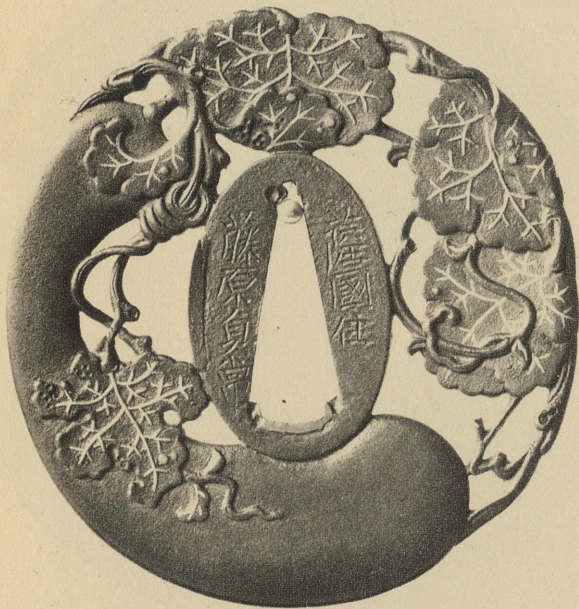
5. - CARDS INSCRIBED WITH POEMS.  
IRON ENCRUSTED WITH SHAKUDŌ MINUTELY INLAID WITH  
GOLD.  
PROBABLY BY SHŌAMI MORITOMI.  
EARLY 19TH CENTURY.

M.220—1921.



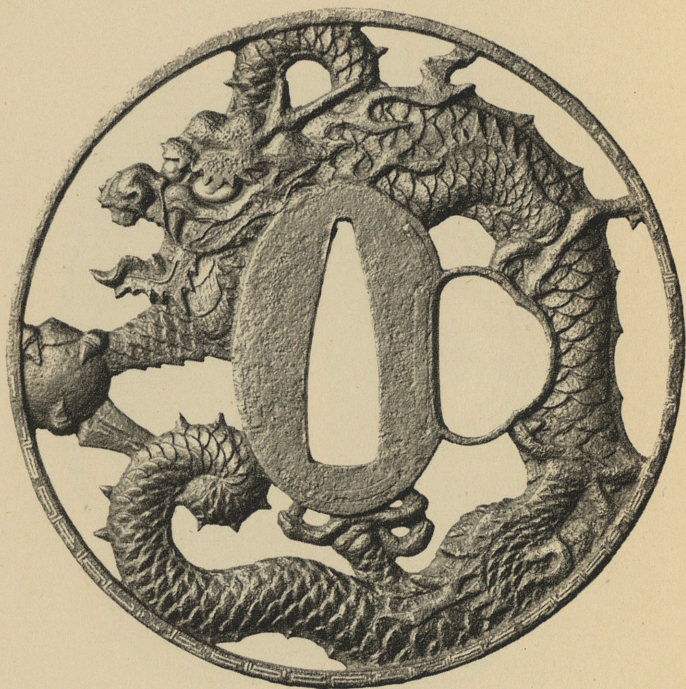
6. A CHINESE FAN.  
PIERCED IRON.  
SIGNED : *Masayoshi* (OF SATSUMA, 18TH CENTURY).  
(ACTUAL SIZE  $4\frac{3}{4}$  IN. BY 4 IN.).

M.7—1923.



7. A GOURD-VINE.  
IRON, WITH SOME SILVER AND GOLD.  
SIGNED: *Sadatsune of Satsuma.*  
19TH CENTURY.

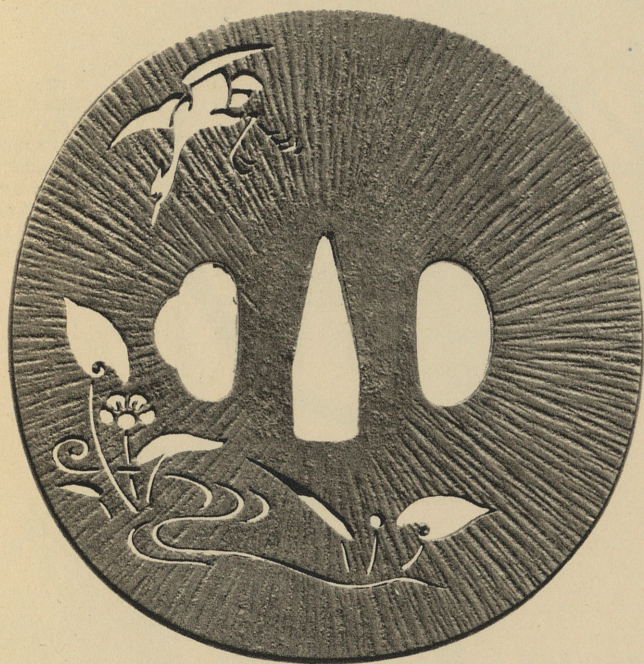
M.291—1923.



8. A DRAGON.

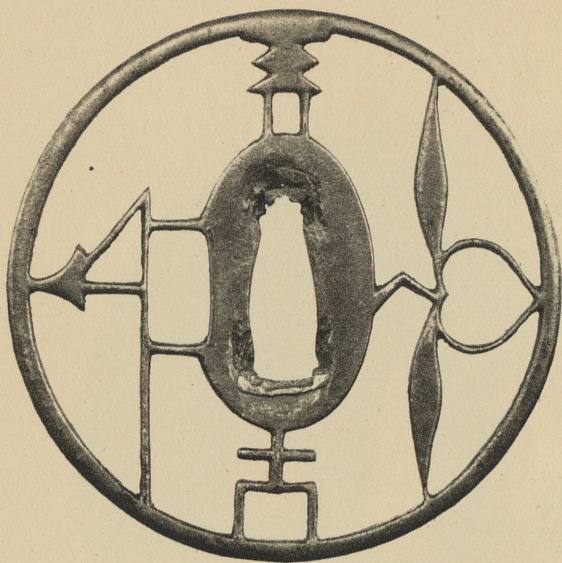
PIERCED IRON, WITH TOUCHES OF GOLD, SILVER AND SHAKUDŌ.  
KINAI STYLE. EARLY 18TH CENTURY.

M.126—1915.

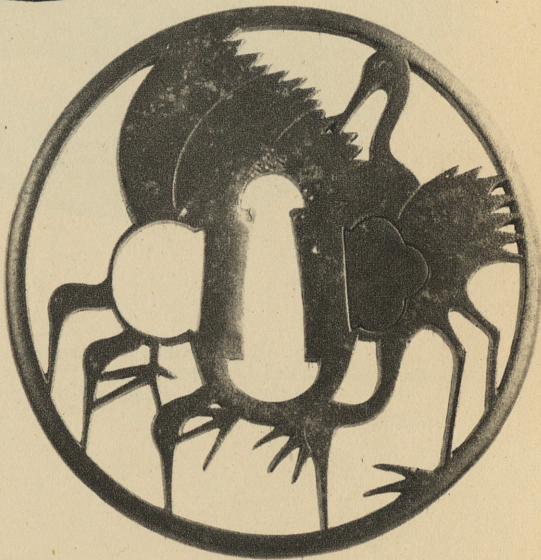


9. AN EGRET AND A LILY-POND.  
PIERCED IRON.  
19TH CENTURY.

M.151—1911.



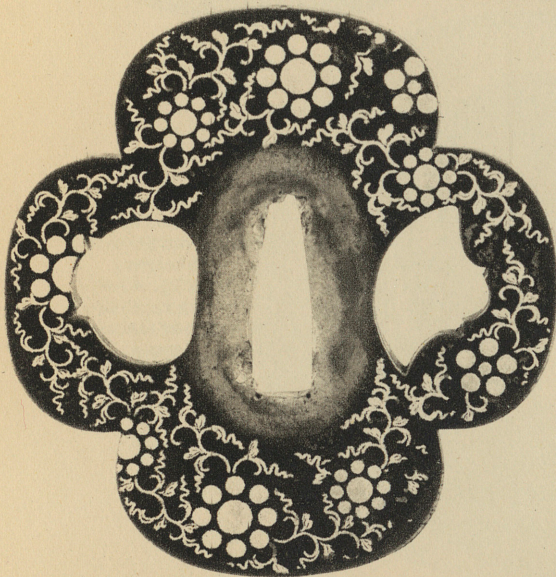
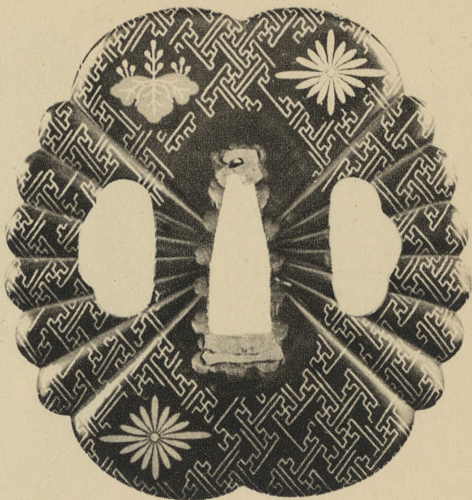
10.  
PINE-NEEDLE, PEACH,  
ETC.  
PIERCED IRON.  
AKASAKA STYLE.  
16TH OR 17TH  
CENTURY.  
ALEXANDER GIFT.  
M.300—1916.



11.  
FIVE CRANES.  
PIERCED IRON.  
AKASAKA STYLE.  
19TH CENTURY.  
M.156—1911.



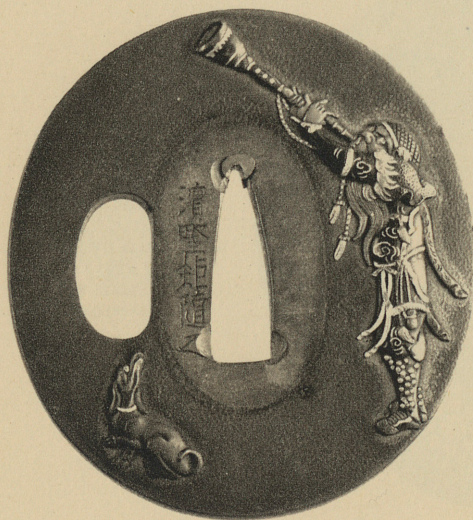
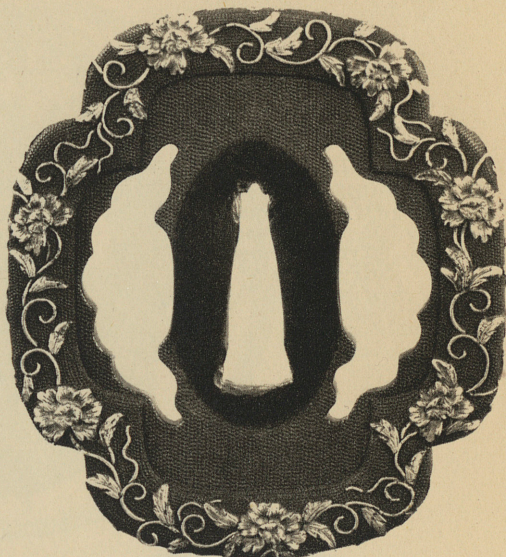
12.  
 HERALDIC BADGES  
 AND SWASTIKA DIAPER.  
 SHAKUDÔ, WITH INLAY  
 OF GOLD, SILVER AND COPPER.  
 KAGA STYLE.  
 19TH CENTURY.  
 M.70—1919.



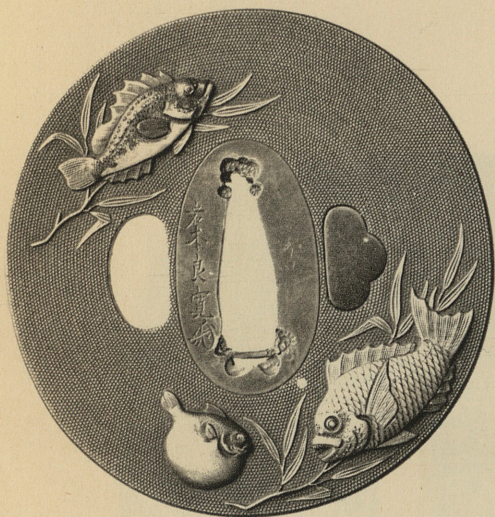
13.  
 HOSOKAWA BADGES  
 AND  
 TENDRILLED SPRAYS.  
 SENTOKU,  
 WITH GOLD OVERLAY.  
 AWA STYLE.  
 18TH CENTURY.  
 M.105—1911.

14.  
 PEONY SPRAYS ON  
 " FISH-ROE " (*nanako*)  
 GROUND.

SHAKUDŌ, WITH  
 GOLD INCRUSTATION.  
 GOTŌ STYLE.  
 ABOUT 1800.  
 M.72—1924.

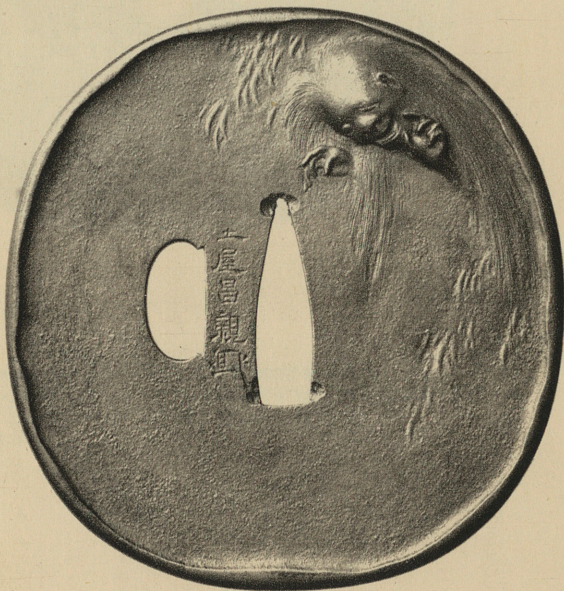


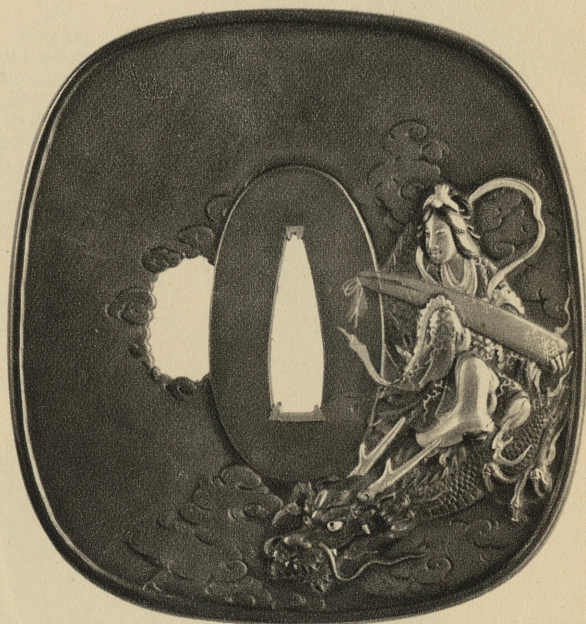
15.  
 A FOREIGNER BLOWING  
 A TRUMPET.  
 SHIBUICHI, WITH  
 INCRUSTATION  
 OF VARIOUS METALS.  
 SIGNED : *Hamano Kuzui*.  
 19TH CENTURY.  
 ALEXANDER GIFT  
 M.440—1916.



16.  
 JAPAN'S  
 CHIEF FOOD-FISHES.  
 SHIBUICHI, WITH  
 " FISH-ROE " GROUND  
 AND INCRUSTATION OF  
 VARIOUS METALS.  
 SIGNED : *Iwamoto Riokwan.*  
 TOWARDS 1800.  
 SIR A. H. CHURCH GIFT.  
 M.141—1915.

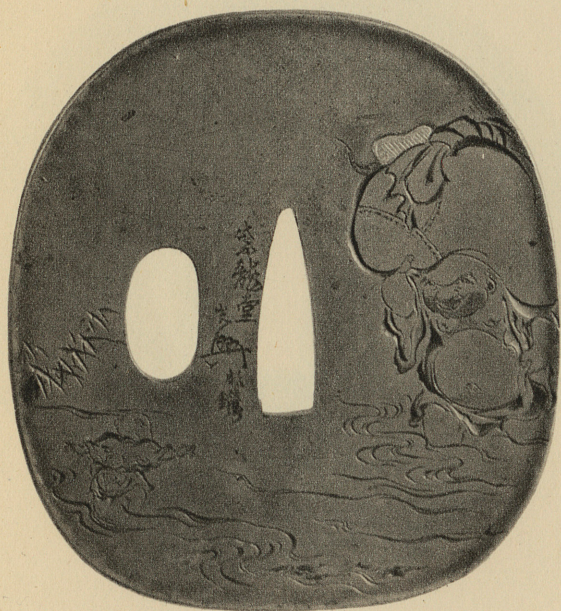
17.  
 THE GHOST OF  
 KASANE.  
 IRON.  
 BY TSUCHIYA  
 MASACHIKA.  
 DATED 1860.  
 FOX GIFT.  
 M.85—1915.





18. THE GODDESS SEISHINNŌ RIDING ON A DRAGON.  
SHIBUICHI WITH INCRUSTATION OF VARIOUS METALS.  
SIGNED : *Shunō Hōgen*. ABOUT 1865.

M.257—1911.

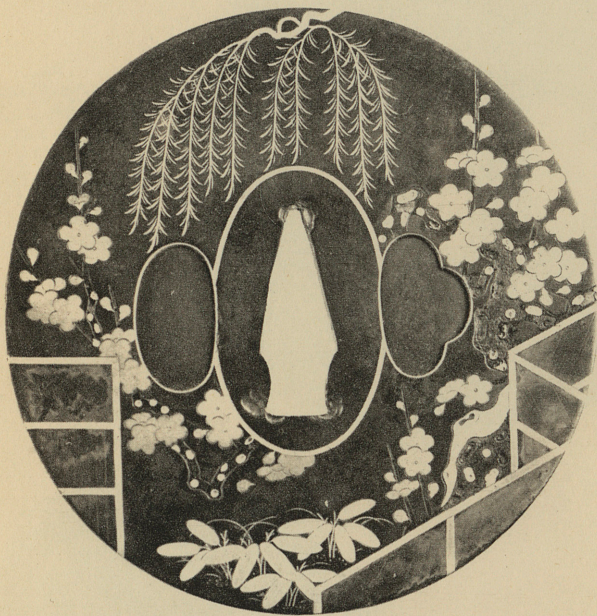


19. THE GOD HOTEI FORDING A STREAM.  
SENTOKU, WITH *katakiri* OR "BRUSH-STROKE" ENGRAVING.  
BY ÔTSUKI MITSUOKI. ABOUT 1800.  
M.308—1911.



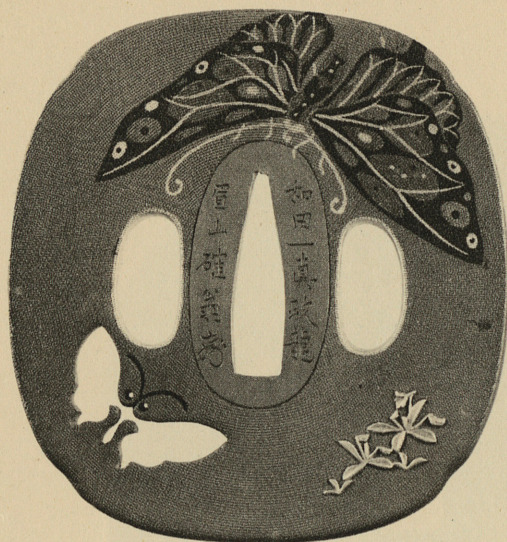
20. DÉBRIS OF BLOSSOMS AND LEAVES  
(*Fukiyose* DESIGN). SIGNED : *Saiya*.  
SHŌNAI SCHOOL. LATE 18TH CENTURY.  
M. B. HUISSH GIFT.

M.31—1919.



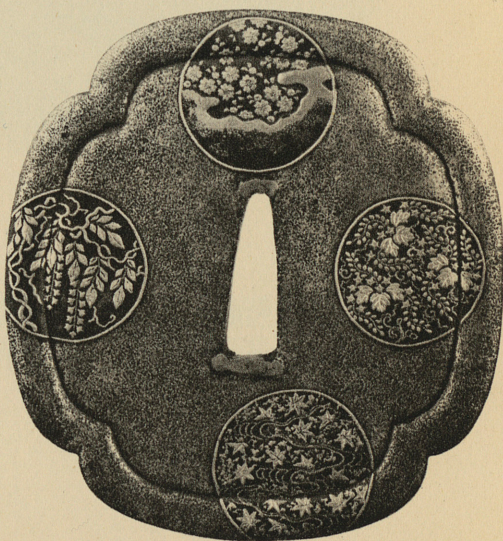
21. A GARDEN SCENE.  
SHAKUDŌ, WITH INLAY OF TINTED GOLD, SILVER, AND  
BLACK COMPOSITION.  
MURAKAMI STYLE. 18TH CENTURY.

M.28—1920.



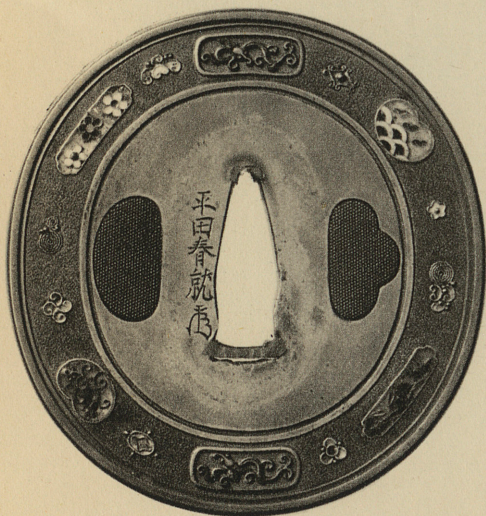
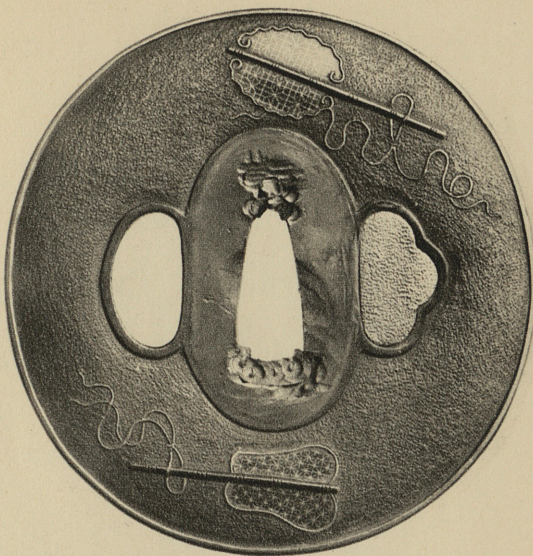
22.  
 BUTTERFLIES.  
 COPPER INLAID WITH  
 VARIOUS METALS.  
 "FISH-ROE" GRANULATION  
 CARRIED OVER THE INLAY.  
 BY WADA MASATATSU.  
 DATED 1857.  
 M.32—1920.

23.  
 FLORAL MEDALLIONS  
 ON POWDERED GROUND.  
 IRON, WITH GOLD  
 OVERLAY.  
 TANAKA STYLE.  
 ABOUT 1800.  
 SIR A. H. CHURCH GIFT.  
 M.151—1914.





24.  
 CHINESE FANS.  
 SHAKUDO WITH FLUSH  
 OR SLIGHTLY RAISED  
 GOLD INLAY.  
 KIYOSADA STYLE.  
 ABOUT 1800.  
 ALEXANDER GIFT.  
 M.594—1916.



25.  
 SENTOKU INLAID WITH  
 TRANSLUCENT ENAMELS IN  
 GOLD CLOISONS.  
 SIGNED :  
*Hirata Harunari*  
 (THE EIGHTH MASTER  
 OF THE  
 HIRATA SCHOOL,  
 EARLY 19TH CENTURY).  
 ALEXANDER GIFT.  
 M.596—1916.



26. THE FOXES' WEDDING PROCESSION.  
SHIBUICHI, INLAID CHIEFLY WITH SHAKUDŌ.  
ABOUT 1830.

M.33—1920.

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V. A. F.

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Victoria and Albert Museum  
A picture book of Japanese sword guards.  
London, Author [1927]  
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